

Kathy Haskins, RN, BSN, MPH

Why did you choose public health nursing?

During my BSN training I very much enjoyed the teaching time and independence afforded by the public health rotation. In the hospital we were busy “doing,” but had little time for the teaching that so many needed. This is what I found in public health. Upon graduation I took a position in pediatrics, because I felt that the hospital experience would be beneficial. However, the arrival of my first child almost two years later gave me the motivation to seek out a PH position. Not only did it provide me a more regular schedule for being a Mom, but it renewed in me the original excitement I had when completing my PH rotation in college.

Please provide a brief description of what you do.

I have now worked in Public Health since early 1985 and cannot picture myself anywhere else. Over the course of years I have served in the role of general Public Health Nurse (which looked completely different then than now), and filling nearly every nursing position that has existed within our agency. The teaching aspect remains the primary reason for my staying – but I also have learned much from clients as well as colleagues. Desiring to improve my skills in the area further, in

2013 I completed my MPH. My current role is that of Public Health Nurse Administrator.

Please describe your role in the health care community where you practice nursing.

As the P.H.N. Administrator I have the opportunity to influence those who provide direct services to our clients and their families, as well as serve as a “team member” with various community agencies and organizations, with the common goal of ensuring quality health education and services for our “customers,” the individuals within and

near the county. The many “lessons” learned along the way help me to see different perspectives.

What do you consider to be the most challenging part of public health nursing?

I think some of the most challenging aspects of public health nursing are related to the educational factors. Helping direct individuals and groups to reliable and accurate information upon which to base health-related decisions, and to dispel harmful myths that keep many from seeking better alternatives is an ongoing issue – a good example of this is immunizations.

What advice do you have for nursing graduates who are considering public health nursing as a career?

Many nursing students are turned off by the lower pay rates earned by PHNs, thereby missing out on the rewarding experience that can be had in knowing you have been a part of influencing the health of the entire community. If you did not have the benefit of sufficient time exploring a public health agency as a student, take the time to check it out shortly after graduation. You may find it to be the most rewarding thing you have ever done.

